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I. Introduction

As I was studying Hun Yuan Qigong I became fascinated with one of the Grandfathers of the system, Master Hu Yaozhen. Being an academic at heart I began researching to see what I could find. I was able to track down copies of a series of early books written by Master Hu, the first dated from 1959. I was fortunate to connect with a marvelous translator who was also trained in Taiji and Qigong. The result of our work together is that Master Hu's Qigong is available to a wider audience. This article introduces Master Hu's form of Qigong. I will describe several important skills that are prerequisites for being able to successfully practice these techniques.

First, let me introduce Master Hu Yaozhen.

II. A brief biography of Hu Yaozhen.

Master Hu was born in Yuci county, Shan Xi province in 1897. As a youth he studied martial arts and medicine. He studied Dao cultivation, inner cultivation, six harmonies heart/mind boxing, and Hua Tao's Five Animal Frolics with Daoist Master Peng Tingjun. He later studied Zài Lu Style Taijiquan (from Yuan Xiuchen) and Buddhist cultivation skills and Zhuang Zi/'Exhale the Old, Inhaling the New' cultivation method (from Buddhist monk Li Hong).

A lifelong Chinese medical doctor, Master Hu was best know for his contributions to the art of Qigong. In 1956 he established a Qigong hospital in Beijing. He was part of a small group of senior practitioners that lifted the name Qigong into wide use. Some have named him the Father of Qigong.

In the end he was a victim of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1969-1973). "Hu Yaozhen, ... , had gradually become more and more famous ... . During the Cultural Revolution everything was turned upside down, and he was reviled because of his greatness. The great had to be brought down; they were pressed down. Hu Yaozhen died with a cone on his head, chained and led around to be publicly ridiculed.[3]"

Sources:

1. Yaron Seidman DAOM (excerpted from: [hunyuaninstitute.com/huandhunyuan.pdf)](http://hunyuaninstitute.com/huandhunyuan.pdf)
2. Hu Yaozhen's Preface to Qi Gong & Preserving Health Gong, published 1959.
3. WANG YEN-NIEN TALKS ABOUT ZHANG QINLIN; An interview by Sam Tomarchio Translated by Julia Fisher-Fairchild (American Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan Association, Volume 3, NO. 2, FALL 1995)

III. The story of Master Hu's first book.

The story of how Master Hu's 1959 Qigong book came into being is told by Yaron Seidman in a 2011 PowerPoint presentation. Excerpts of his presentation follow.

"In October 1959 Hu Yaozhen was invited to the 'First Entire China Qigong Experience Sharing and Symposium'全国气功工作经验座 谈会及学术交流会 in Bei Dai He北戴河, a coastal town in north eastern China, between Tian Jin and Liao Ning. This symposium ordered by the Chinese government had the goal of "revealing all secrets" and making them available to the people. At that time the newly communist China had slightly shifted its attitude from 'banning the old' to 'using the old knowledge to benefit the structure." The event was 15 days long and included topics on Qigong, Buddhism, Daoism, Inner Cultivation, medicine, and more. Participants included a large number of doctors, healers, and practitioners from all of China." (Seidman, PowerPoint presentation, 2011)

On the seventh day of the event other practitioners demonstrated their techniques and teachings. Master Hu remained quiet during this period. Finally Master Hu then presented and demonstrated. As was the required practice of the time, Master Hu disavowed any wrong doing. He explained that he wasn't a Daoist hermit, and that he practiced Qigong and Inner Cultivation to correct his contrary behaviors and attitudes. His presentation was so impressive that the supervisors and leaders of the communist party arranged a special event for him to demonstrate his Inner Cultivation and Qigong skills.

The committee was so taken with Master Hu's teachings that the Department of Health immediately went about getting his teachings published. It was seen as a way to benefit the people and was published within a month.

Sources:

4. PowerPoint presentation, Yaron Seidman, 2011

IV. Master Hu's form of Qigong

Master Hu describes his unique form of Qigong in his 1959 book, Qigong. The writing style of the time is rather dense. I (ks) have taken the liberty of breaking up the original style into multiple sections in order to highlight Master Hu's teachings.

The fundamental features of Qigong

Qigong, as it was handed down by the ancients, is a method for nourishing life and treating disease. It can be a personal practice for self healing and treating adaptive, chronic diseases.

As an introduction to Qigong, this books describes its fundamental features:

1. This Qigong helps one develop the ability to enter into a state of complete stillness and tranquility. Once this is achieved, one's body can be moved in an effortless manner (unencumbered by unconscious patterns of tension).
2. Within this state of stillness and tranquility, one can experience internal (Qi movement) and external motion (effortless movement of the body).

This Qigong is made up of Primary Exercises, Supplemental Exercises, and Situational Applications with the purpose of promoting health and eliminating disease. There are no fixed postures in this system; one's body, heart, and mind must be comfortable and relaxed. None of the postures are meant to put force or strain on the body.

One trains to unite the breath with one's intent. Once the breath becomes truly natural, one can prevent the onset of disease. As one becomes skilled at entering the state of stillness and tranquility, Thinking and Inner Vision (内观 Nèi Guān - which is seeing with the mind/intent) develop. As one turns their attention from the senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, sending/feeling), one focuses their attention on the Dantian, the Huiyin, and the Mingmen. One trains the Qi (vital energy), the Shén (vital spirit), and the Jīng (vital essence).

Therapeutic benefits can be achieved once one enters a state of stillness and tranquility. Movement becomes effortless and unencumbered by patterns of tension. Using massage plus the generation and movement of Qi one can counter pathological changes.

Source:

5. Hu Yaozhen, Qigong, 1959, p.1; translated by Ariel Maayan, 2019, modified by Kevin Siddons, 2019)

V. Master Hu's Dantian Locations

Master Hu uses some different locations for the positions of the Three Dantians.

- The Upper Dantian is located behind the point precisely between both eyes; the xuanquan (the Dark or Mysterious Gate) located between the eyebrows.
- The Middle Dantian is located behind the umbilicus. This is also known as the front dantian.
- The Lower Dantian is located above the huiyin point (Meeting of Yin) located at the perineum.
- An additional location is the Mingmen (Gate of Destiny) located between the 2nd and 3rd lumbar vertebrae, opposite the front dantian. The Mingmen is also known as the back dantian.

These locations are used in Master Hu's Primary Exercises known as Keeping the Mind On (or Guarding). His first Primary Exercise is Keeping the Mind on the Middle Dantian.

Sources:

6. HYZ, Qigong, 1959. Translated by Ariel Maayan, 2019.

VI. Xingqi Exercises

Qigong is a term that came into use in the late 1950's.

"Dao Yin exercise has a broad and a narrow meaning. In the broad sense, any active Chinese exercise theory or method that aims to achieve the "harmony between the internal direction of vital energy and the external stretching of the body" can be considered as a form of "Dao Yin exercise." This can be practiced through Tu Na (expiration and inspiration), body stretching, massaging, Lian Dan (inner alchemy), Zuo Chan (sitting in meditation), inward contemplation, and so on. These methods are habitually categorized into "Dao Yin" and "Xing Qi (promoting the circulation of qi)" in line with the traditional standards in ancient times. Both "Dao Yin" and "Xing Qi" take the cultivation of essence (the fundamental substance which maintains the functioning of the body), qi, and spirits as their core, …." (p.1)

Sources:

7. Dao Yin (a.k.a. Qigong): Origin, Development, Potential Mechanisms, and Clinical Applications

VII. Keeping the Mind on the Middle Dantian

Master Hu divides his teachings into two categories: Primary Training and Supplemental Training. Primary Training is focused on preserving health and preventing disease. Keeping the Mind on the Middle Dantian is one of the Primary Training techniques.

In the 1959 Qigong book Master Hu teaches Keeping the Mind on the Middle Dantian. It is made up of two parts: 1) Keeping the Mind On; and 2) Ongoing Keeping the Mind On. I will present both.

From Chinese Medical Qigong (2013)

> "The purpose of "keeping the mind on" is to filter out stray thoughts and eliminate distractions by replacing miscellaneous thoughts with only one thought and to induce perception that is initiated primarily by the location and nature of the point of focus. Replacing miscellaneous thoughts with just one thought can help settle emotions, eliminate illusions, and stabilize the mind." (Page 195)

I find ‘Keeping the Mind On’ equivalent to Mindfulness. Here are some definitions of Mindfulness by two of its leading teachers, Thich Nhat Hanh and John Kabot Zin.

Thich Nhat Hanh:

> "Mindfulness is the energy of being aware and awake to the present moment. It is the continuous practice of touching life deeply in every moment of daily life. To be mindful is to be truly alive, present, and at one with those around you and with what you are doing. We bring our body and mind into harmony while we wash the dishes, drive the car, or take our morning shower."

John Kabot Zinn:

> "Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally... It’s about knowing what is on your mind."

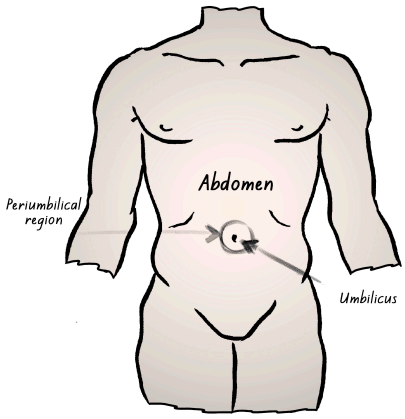
Wikipedia provides a good summary of Mindfulness.

From Wikipedia:

> **"Mindfulness** is the psychological process of bringing one's attention to experiences occurring in the present moment, which one can develop through the practice of meditation and through other training. The term "mindfulness" corresponds to the Pali term sati which is a significant element of Buddhist traditions. Followers of Buddhist teachings utilize mindfulness to develop self-knowledge and wisdom that gradually lead to what is described as enlightenment or the complete freedom from suffering. The popularity of mindfulness in the modern Western context is generally considered to have been initiated by John Kabot-Zinn (1944-)."
>
> <- Given the deep similarity between ‘Keeping the Mind On’ and Mindfulness I will use the terms interchangeably.

Primary Exercises:

Master Hu taught three ‘Keeping the Mind On’ exercises: Keeping the Mind on the Middle Dantian, Keeping the Mind on the Mingmen, and Keeping the Mind on the Huiyin (Lower Dantian). In this article I will be presenting the first of the three.



Keeping the Mind On / Mindfulness of The Middle Dantian.

Practice being Mindful of your breath as you practice abdominal breathing. Remember Qi follows your attention and in this exercise, your breath. Relax you

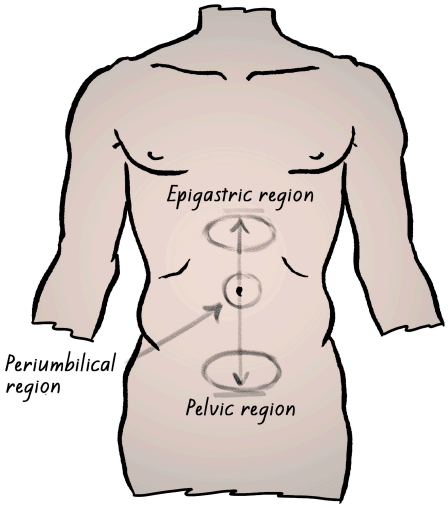
abdominal muscles so your belly can move while you breathe. Place you attention on the space behind your umbilicus (bellybutton). This is the Middle Dantian.

Practice abdominal breathing so that you feel your bellybutton moving out during your inhalation and in during your exhalation. Practice this so that it becomes easy to do.

Whenever distractions occur, simply and happily bring your attention back to your breathing and the sensation of Qi gathering in the Middle Dantian. While you are Keeping Your Mind On your breathing allow your body and mind to enter into relaxation and calmness (know as Quiescence, Calm Abiding, Shamatha, and Tranquility). As we relax and become calm, our arms and legs, hands and feet may become warm and heavy. The umbilicus (Middle Dantian) may also become warm. This is the body's Relaxation Response (also know as the Quieting Response). This is the Qigong State; the body relaxed, the mind / spirit / heart calm and tranquil.

Practically, to help develop this state of Calm Abiding:

- Let your eyes be lightly closed.
- Focus your attention on your breath. Listen to your breathing. Visualize and sense the breath moving through your nose, back of the throat, the throat, the bronchial tube, the lungs and chest, all the way to the abdomen. Follow the breath in and out. Breathe at a normal pace.
- Allow your arms and legs to become still and relaxed. Then your arms and legs; your back, belly, and chest; your shoulders; your neck and head; your face.
- As you inhale, feel the pressure of your abdomen expanding against your spine. Exhale and let the abdomen relax back into its relax position. Visualize the movement of the breath in and out of your abdomen.
- Continue to be mindful of your breathing down to your abdomen. Notice and enjoy your breath. Continue to relax your body deeply. This will help your mind to continue to settle into calmness. Do this for the length of time that you set aside for meditation.



Staying Mindful of the Middle Dantian

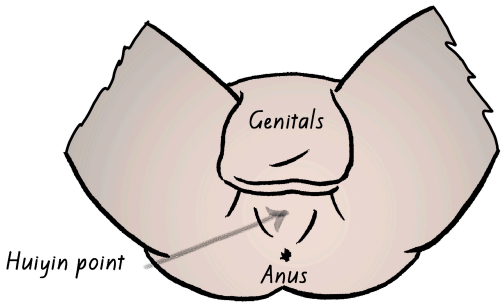
After become skilled at Keeping the Mind On the Middle Dantian there are two methods that can be practiced to maintain Mindfulness of the Middle Dantian.

Method 1

- Use your intention to draw the Qi up and down as you breath out and in. It is not necessary for the abdomen to move at this time. The breath may be slow and quiet.
- It should not go above the epigastrium or below the top of the bone on the lower abdomen, which is qǔ gǔ (曲骨 - Ren 2 - Curved bone - located at the top of the pubic symphysis).

Method 2:

- Draws the Qi from the Middle Dantian down to the Huiyin (Lower Dantian) while inhaling qi.
- As you exhale, draw the Qi from the Huiyin back to the Middle Dantian.
- Breathe in this way as you remain Mindful of the Middle Dantian. This can be practiced for an extended period.



VIII.The function of Keeping the Mind on the Middle Dantian

"Keeping the mind on the dantian is the fundamental qigong method of this book." (Master Hu Yaozhen, 1959; Ariel Maayan, 2019)

Master Hu advises practicing Keeping the Mind on the Mingmen and Keeping the Mind on the Huiyin after one has mastered Keeping the Mind on the Middle Dantian. The exercises should be practiced in this order: 1) Middle Dantian; 2) Mingmen; 3) Huiyin. He describes Keeping the Mind on the Middle Dantian as the underlying foundation of qigong.

"The ancients said, "There are three treasures of heaven: the sun, the moon, and the stars. Man also has three treasures, jing, qi, and shen. When these three treasures are diminished, disease results. When they are exhausted, death results. These three treasures are trained through practices of rectifying the psyche and nourishing of one's nature (nourishing life). " (Master Hu Yaozhen, 1959; Ariel Maayan, 2019)

When we nourish our nature, we:

- cause the shen to descend and the jing to ascend,
- train the transformation of jing into qi,
- train the transformation of qi into shen, and
- unblock the free flow of qi and blood throughout the body,

- thus eliminating disease, nourishing vitality, promoting longevity, and extending one's lifespan.

When we train qigong, we train jing, qi, and shen.

As we travel through life, the sights and sounds of the world around us can cause the mind and heart to become chaotic. This injures shen. Chaotic speech injures qi. Chaotic sexual relationships can injure jing. This can deplete prenatal qi (Original qi). Thus original shen, original qi, and original jing diminish.

Because of this yin and yang, qi are imbalanced. When yang is weak and yin dominates, the body can grow feeble. When the body's ability to defend itself is thus weakened one can be more easily injured internally by external factors. This leads to the generation of disease.

The external factors are: wind, cold, summer heat, dampness, dryness, and fire. These are known as transgressive qi. The endogenously harmful factors are the seven emotions: joy, rage, worry, rumination, sadness, fear, and shock.

Wind has the ability to generate the hundred diseases. Wind first enters through the skin and pores. It then travels to the lungs. If treated at this point, the wind can be dispersed and one will recover. If not treated, wind can be transmitted to other channels or organs. If it travels through the muscles, it will effect the spleen. If it is travels through the tendons and ligaments, it will effect the liver. If it is transmitted through the vessels, it will effect the heart. If it is transmitted through the bones, it will effect the kidneys.

Once effected by wind, one is more susceptible to other transgressive qi. Also, any of the emotions can effect qi. Qi needs to flow smoothly so that blood will not stagnant and congeal. This can effect the zang (yin) organs. True prenatal qi can become effected and further depleted.

By practicing and training qigong, one can train prenatal qi. By generating yang qi, the yin qi can be scattered. True qi can cause evil qi to retreat, disease to be healed.

By Keeping the Mind in the Middle Dantian, one trains the qi and the shen. One also trains prenatal qi (also known as original qi). The umbilicus is known as the stem of life. In a child after the clipping of the umbilical cord, some true yang (灵气 - língqi or numinous qi) returns and enters the umbilicus. The Middle Dantian is the root of human life. The goal of this qigong is to bring the original heavenly qi back into the body by way of the middle dantian.

According to Chinese Medicine, Yinyang Theory, and the Five Elements, the Middle Dantian is the central earth of wu and ji (戊己 - the fifth and sixth heavenly stems). The Middle Dantian connects the five zang organs and the six fu organs, the twelve

channels, and the fifteen collaterals. By Keeping one's mind and intent on the Middle Dantian while sitting for an extended period, qi and blood are generated within the dantian. When these are sufficient, the body becomes robust. Keeping the Mind on the Middle Dantian while practicing qigong will facilitate recovery and strengthen the body's resistance to illness. It strengthens and solidifies the qi, replenishes deficiencies of blood and internal fluids, improves circulation of qi and blood, and improves internal organ function and condition.

Keeping the Mind on the Middle Dantian improves abdominal breathing. This strengthens the diaphragm's ability to descend. This improves the undulation of the abdominal muscles. It facilitates gastric and intestinal peristalsis; improving food absorption and elimination. Spontaneous movement can loosen the muscle channels and the spaces in the joints.

When training, one needs to focus the attention on the breath (Mindfulness of Breathing). In this way one's thoughts will not become scattered. The breathing needs to be natural. In this way one's dantian breathing follows their respiration (external movements).

Training shen in this context means training the spirit of the heart. Sitting in quiescence will nourish and repair the heart. By bringing calmness to the heart, we grow our shen/spirit. By keeping the mind on the middle dantian, we can direct our shen downwards allowing our nervous system to rest fully. This allows the internal organs to become restored so they can better regulate our internal processes.

IX. The Method of Gathering the Qi (采气法)

One of the Supplemental Trainings Master Hu taught was The Method of Gathering the Qi. Supplemental Trainings are chosen based on the individual's condition and can be adapted to may situations.

Its name, "Gathering the Qi", refers to the qi in the sky, and thus it is generally practiced every morning when the air is fresh.

Its process is as follows:

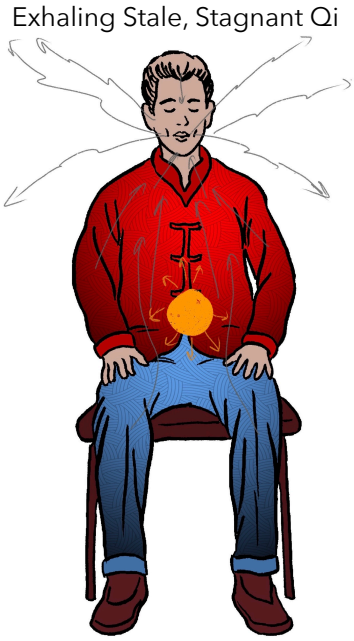
- stand with your feet level and about shoulder-width apart with both hands hanging down (this can also be practiced seated), and both eyes lightly closed.
- Using the mind/intent to lead the qi (meaning the inner qi), first exhale and then inhale (using

Drawing Qi to the Middle Dantian

the mouth to exhale and the nose to inhale). Although one is doing this to the utmost, it must be gentle and slow.

Leading Qi to the Middle Dantian

- When exhaling, your lips should be slightly parted, and the opening of your mouth should be small. The tip of your tongue should be lower than the root of your tongue.
- Lead the qi with your mind as you exhale out your mouth. Following the speed of respiration, the belly correspondingly contracts.
- Once you are unable to exhale any longer, inhale.
- When inhaling qi, the mouth should be closed and the tongue should be placed against the upper palate.
- Air should enter through the nostrils, and the mind should lead the qi from the ancestral portal, back through the baihui to the mingmen directly to the dantian.


Exhaling Stale, Stagnant Qi

- At a speed matching your respiration, your belly should simultaneously expand.
- When you are unable to inhale any more (and when the belly is unable to swell any further), exhale once more.
- Counting one exhalation and one inhalation as one cycle, practice this for 36 cycles.
- When first starting out with this training, just practice it for a few cycles, gradually increasing your number of repetitions every day; don't jump right into practicing for 36 repetitions.
- The closing procedure is the same as for primary training.

X. Summary

Master Hu gives us a wealth of qigong techniques in this early text. His techniques take some serious practice to master. By developing the energy of mindfulness, first of the breath, we build our ability to focus on these subtle internal energy flows. By

developing the skill of mental imagery, we can create personalized representations of these subtle flows. As we quiet the mind through mindfulness, first of our breath, then of the energies moving through the body, our attention strengthens. As we build our personal mental imagery of this internal energy flow, our awareness of this flow becomes more articulated and stronger. Also, with the emphasis on Calm Abiding (tranquil or quiescent) meditation, our bodies relax and our minds become calm. This further accentuates our healing process.

I hope this article has provides some assistance to your qigong practice. I also hope that I have honored the work of Master Hu Yaozhen.